

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A printing blanket comprising:  
a carrier sleeve layer having at least one axially convex surface; and  
a print layer disposed over the carrier sleeve layer.
2. The printing blanket as recited in claim 1 wherein the carrier sleeve layer is thicker in an axial middle than at axial ends.
3. The printing blanket as recited in claim 1 wherein the carrier sleeve is of uniform thickness.
4. The printing blanket as recited in claim 1 wherein the print layer has a uniform thickness.
5. The printing blanket as recited in claim 1 wherein the print layer is gapless and tubular.
6. The printing blanket as recited in claim 1 wherein an outer surface of the print layer has a convex axial profile when the blanket is disposed on the blanket cylinder without pressure.
7. The printing blanket as recited in claim 1 wherein the blanket provides uniform axial print or nip pressure across the width of the blanket.
8. The printing blanket as recited in claim 1 further including a compressible layer disposed between the carrier sleeve layer and the print layer.
9. The printing blanket as recited in claim 8 further comprising an inextensible layer disposed over the compressible layer and underneath the print layer.

10. The printing blanket as recited in claim 1 wherein the printing blanket has at least two axial image areas.
11. The printing blanket as recited in claim 10 wherein the printing blanket has at least three axial image areas.
12. An offset printing press comprising:
  - an image cylinder;
  - a blanket cylinder; and
  - a printing blanket having a carrier sleeve layer having at least one axially convex surface and a print layer disposed over the carrier sleeve layer.
13. The offset printing press as recited in claim 12 wherein the printing press is a lithographic web printing press.
14. The offset printing press as recited in claim 12 wherein the image cylinder has at least two axial image areas.
15. An offset printing press comprising:
  - an image cylinder,
  - a blanket cylinder having an axially convex outer surface, and
  - a printing blanket disposed over the axially convex outer surface.
16. The offset printing press as recited in claim 15 wherein the printing press is a lithographic web printing press.
17. The offset printing press as recited in claim 12 wherein the image cylinder has at least two axial image areas.

18. An axially profiled shim for placement between a blanket cylinder and a blanket, the shim comprising:

a shim body having an axially convex outer surface.

19. A blanket cylinder comprising:

a cylinder body having a convex outer surface.